

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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KANGAROOS AGAIN PROPOSED AS ENDANGERED SPECIES

Three kangaroo species have been proposed once again in the Federal Register for inclusion on the List of Endangered Foreign Wildlife by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton because of a legal technicality and an apparent further deterioration of the kangaroo situation in Australia. Comments received before June 4, 1974, from interested parties will be considered before a final determination is made.

Secretary Morton said, "This second proposal for listing the red kangaroo, the eastern gray kangaroo, and the western gray kangaroo is required because the new Endangered Species Act of 1973 was signed into law before final action was completed on the January 1973 initial proposal considering these kangaroos for listing. The 1973 Endangered Species Act repealed the 1969 Endangered Species Act and thereby voided the pending proposal."

Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service has been in continuing contact with the Australian government concerning kangaroos. Furthermore, it will send two professional biologists to Australia later this month for first-hand consultation with Australian officials and biologists, and also with conservation groups, regarding the current status and management problems of these three species.

Secretary Morton said, "It must be stressed that this action is merely a proposal. A final determination will not be made until we have reviewed all evidence received during the 60-day comment period, and, most importantly, after the report by our two biologists has been studied."

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Specifically, evidence on hand suggests that kangaroo populations are affected by four major factors:

- a. reduction of range and habitat,
- b. heavy commercial exploitation,
- c. inadequate existing regulatory mechanisms, and
- d. other natural and man-made factors.

Settlement, animal husbandry, agriculture, forestry, and mining appear to have reduced kangaroo habitat and range. Heavy commercial exploitation of kangaroos for hides and meat seems to be continuing despite the present ban on the export of kangaroo products put into effect in May 1973. Prior to the ban this commercial harvest reached a peak of two million kangaroos annually. Present regulations on kangaroo harvesting seem to lack the uniformity and coordination needed to insure the animal's well-being and continued existence. Lack of funding and staffing in Australian states appears to be seriously hampering the implementation of an effective kangaroo management program. The continued and increasing high demand worldwide for kangaroo hides and meat encourages heavy commercial exploitation. Additionally the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is concerned over the February 1974 opening to commercial kangaroo harvest of a previously closed area in New South Wales.

After these three species of kangaroo were proposed for U.S. Endangered Foreign Wildlife listing in January 1973, Australian federal and state officials met to address the kangaroo situation and to establish a federal-state conservation program. The Australian Minister of Customs took actions which prohibited the export of kangaroos and kangaroo products from Australia. As a result, the Interior Department deferred further action on placing the three species of kangaroos on the endangered list pending receipt of additional information from the Australian government on the management practices in each state and on the development and implementation of a federal kangaroo management plan in Australia, and until the Department of the Interior could obtain first-hand observations of the effectiveness of the new management plans.

Secretary Morton said, "The new Endangered Species Act of 1973 gives the Fish and Wildlife Service additional authority to conserve threatened or endangered species which can be applied in the kangaroo situation. It allows the Service, for example, to regulate imports of a threatened species before that species becomes truly endangered.

Supporting evidence for this proposal is on file with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. The Fish and Wildlife Service is continuing to seek additional information concerning the status of these three kangaroos. Interested persons are invited to submit written comments and suggestions concerning this proposal to the Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240, Attn: Office of Endangered Species and International Activities. Comments received by June 4, 1974, will be considered.